



The Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence

# Journal of Terrorism Research



## Book Review

### Anthony Richards, Peter Fussey and Andrew Silke (eds.). *Terrorism and the Olympics: Major event security and lessons for the future.*

Routledge: Oxon UK, 2011. pp. 243. Hardcover: £68.50-£81.00. ISBN: 978-0-415-49939-2. Paperback (Avail. 1 Apr 2012): £24.95. Amazon Kindle: £56.52.

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As the London Olympics and Paralympics start dates rapidly approach, the practitioners of counter-terrorism for major sporting and entertainment events are intensely focused on making the 2012 Games and their associated gatherings safe and incident free. The planning, preparations, and exercises started months ago are continuing, and the vital links for international cooperation are being established or strengthened so that a comprehensive effort to protect venues, competitors, spectators, and transport systems across London and at UK points of entry can be effectively mounted. In as much as it is possible, we can take comfort that our anti- and counter-terrorism professionals, seen and unseen, are doing exactly what is required for our security during this summer's events.

In advance of much of this milieu of practical activity, in the summer of 2011 Routledge published a hardcover, edited volume that includes submissions from eleven noted academics, anti-, and counter-terrorism practitioners with the goals of; (1) producing a volume that would fill gaps in our studies of terrorism within the environment of the Olympics, Paralympics, and major events, and by doing so, (2) publishing what might be considered a complete primer covering the full spectrum of interrelated aspects of anti- and counter-terrorism efforts not only germane to the Olympics but to all major, mass-audience events. *Terrorism and the Olympics: Major event security and lessons for the future*, edited by Anthony Richards, Peter Fussey and Andrew Silke, has most certainly attained the first goal through its unique and comprehensive approach, and it has definitely accomplished the second in that it is that much-needed primer.

As one of the superb series Political Violence, edited by the late Professor Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism and the Olympics* faithfully follows a standard formula. It is a high-quality and academically-sound volume that examines a specific theme in great detail by lucidly taking the reader through the issues and arguments of its subject. The chapters' applicability also extends beyond the Olympics/Paralympics to include any major sporting or mass entertainment event. As a result, the book covers such critical issues as an examination of terrorism specifically directed at the Olympics (Chapters 2 and 13), the potential for and methods of attacks by Al Qaeda and jihadist terrorists (Chapter 3), terrorist targeting (Chapter 4), the practical side of securing and conducting surveillance for the facilities and transport (Chapters 5–7), and the practical measures underway to provide the complete legal and internationally-coordinated efforts to yield a secure environment (Chapters 8–12).



As an edited volume, *Terrorism and the Olympics* presents the reader with a logical flow of well-written chapters that, by their order and the breadth of topics covered, facilitate the reader's understanding and grasp of the editors' purpose. While the book suffers somewhat from the most common shortcoming of edited volumes (an occasional unevenness of writing styles between the chapter authors), the strength of the editors is evident in the consistency of concepts, definitions, and terminology used by the chapter authors throughout the volume. Likewise, the editors have done a superb job of including the correct topics and selecting quality authors who can represent the full spectrum of the discipline within the framework of the Olympics, major events, and mass gatherings. And this quality is exactly where *Terrorism and the Olympics* shines. In our discipline, it is rare to find a compilation of chapters joined together in one themed-binding and written by separate authors that efficiently bridges the divide between theorists and practitioners. This edited volume is one of those few rare cases. *Terrorism and the Olympics*, however, does more.

The editors of *Terrorism and the Olympics* have not only produced a volume that covers the theory and the practicalities of the topic by using a holistic approach to the subject, they have somehow managed to do so in a way that encourages the reader to research further. For example, Afzal Ashraf's chapter "Al Qaeda and the London Olympics" is an amazingly lucid and well-written description of the motivation, means, methods, and more for this international threat. While necessarily limited for the purposes of this book, this chapter is one of several that enticed this reader to read and explore other texts in this very specific discipline. Certainly, anyone wanting a synopsis of Al Qaeda should read this chapter. Likewise, Silke's excellent chapter on "Targeting", Swain's detailed chapter "Securing the Public Transport", and Weston's *essential* chapter regarding, "The challenge of inter-agency coordination" are three examples of cogent, concise, and well-written chapters that inform while engendering in the reader an intense desire to know more.

If there is a negative to *Terrorism and the Olympics* it is that as a part of the Political Violence series, the hardcover version is excessively expensive (Amazon.co.uk lists it as £68.50-£81.00). This might be acceptable for some readers and their budgets. But the idea that comes across clearly in the organisation, design, and written text of this book is that it is intended to have practical as well as academic-theoretical uses. To produce such an expensive volume and expect wide reading for practical purposes is counter-intuitive in today's economic environment. Fortunately, the paperback back version is due out in April 2012 and should be available for around £25.00.

Beyond cost, however, there is nothing negative of any consequence to say about this unique work, and much more positive than can be written about it in this short review. For anyone studying terrorism and mass-audience events or practicing anti- and counter-terrorism for them, *Terrorism and the Olympics: Major event security and lessons for the future* is an absolute must-have in your library as soon as you can possibly get a copy.